



回游
かいゆう
の
森
もり
灰原薬
Kaiyuu no Mori
Kurogane

The Migratory Forest

— A Collection of Walks —

灰原薬

feantes

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灰原 葉
Yak Haibara

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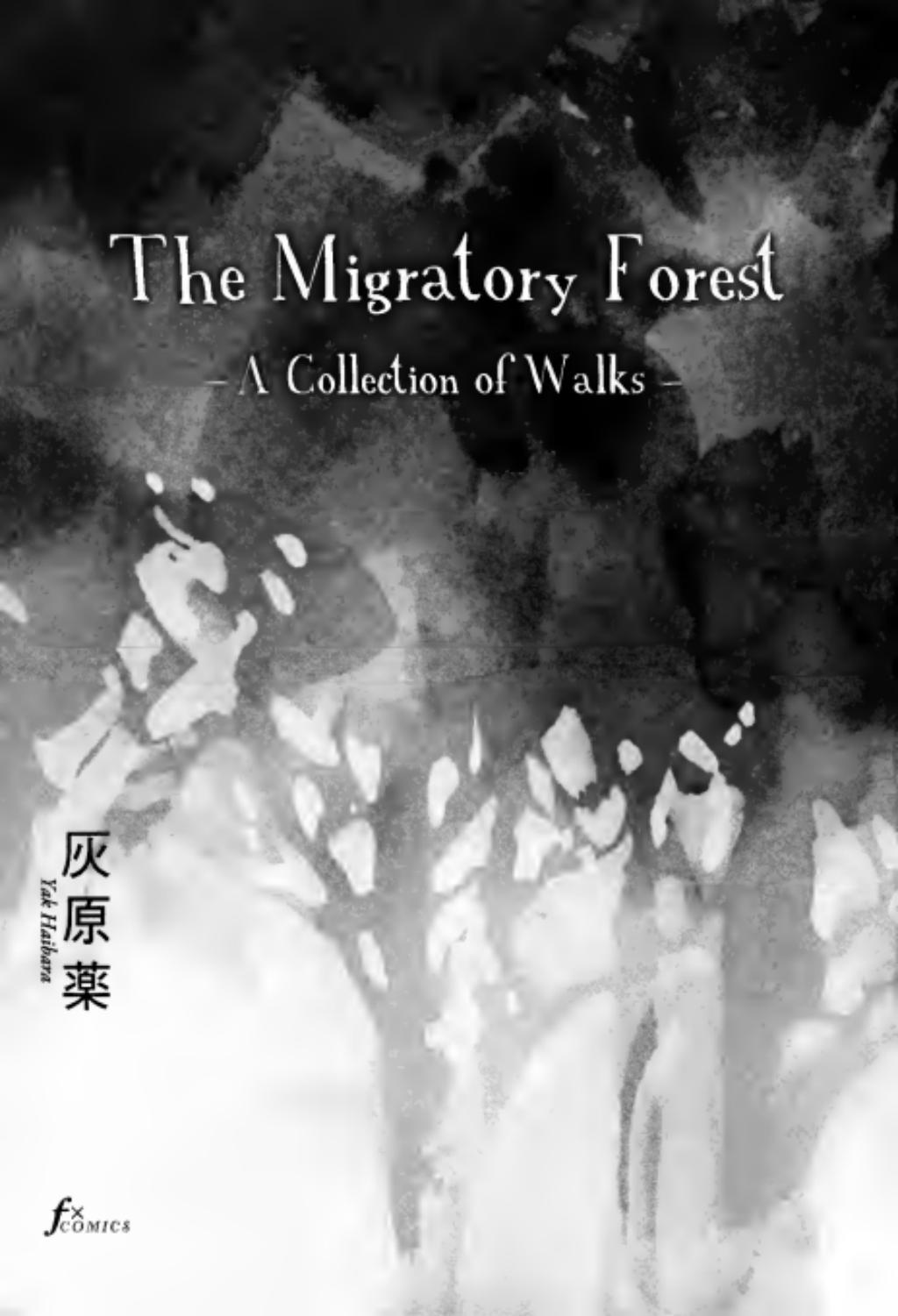
f_C^X
COMICS

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f_{COMICS}

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Nii-
chan.



Satoshi-

niichan.



Hab

Hab



"Our little secret~"



SFX: GASP...

Because
of a memorial
service*, I'm
back at my
grandmother's
house for the
first time in
more than a
decade

Chapter 1 Mirage

*TEN FUNERALS IN JAPAN GENERALLY FOLLOW BUDDHIST TRADITION AND SUCCESSIVE
MEMORIAL SERVICES ARE HELD ON CERTAIN ANNIVERSARIES OF ONE'S DEATH.

The forest
in the back
continues all
the way into
the hills. Not
only is this
place in the
middle of the
countryside,
it's deep in the
mountains

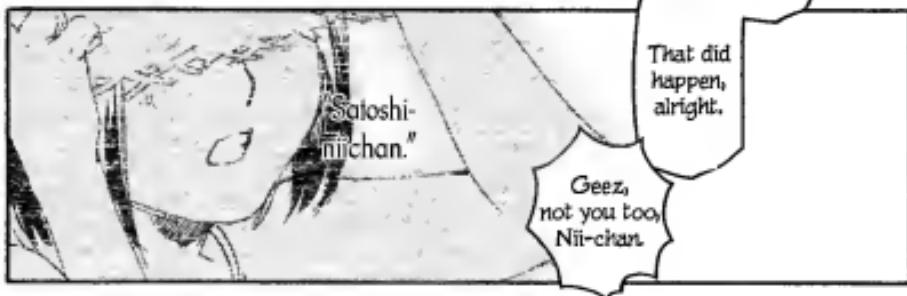
So
hot...







been
afraid of
meeting
her again.





T/N: SHE APPEARS TO BE HOLDING THE TYPE OF FOLDER USED FOR SETTING UP "MATCHMAKING INTERVIEWS". MIGHT CONTAIN A SINGLE LARGE PHOTO OF THE PROPOSED CANDIDATE AND PERHAPS A "RESUME" OF SORTS.



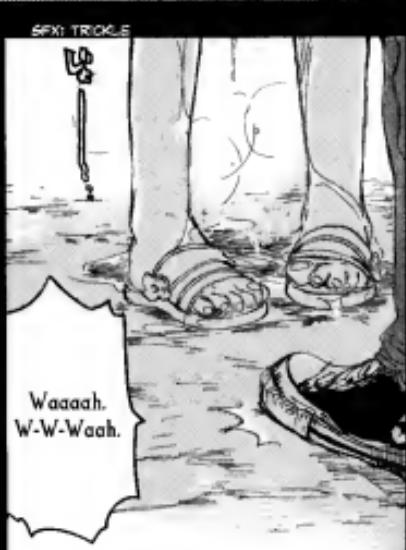


SFX: GRIP

SFX: CICADAS CHIRPING









Miyo-chan,
can you tell me
where you keep
your clothes?

But first,
let's get you showered...

Oh,
yeah. She
won't be
back until
evening.

Oba-san-?

Well, I
guess you're
not in a state to
do it alone...

SFX: SOSSING

It feels
icky right now,
doesn't it?

So let's
get you nice
and clean.

SFX: OCAPAS CHIRPING

SFX: NOP

She's only a
four-year-old
kid, after all.

Will ya
wash me?

Sniff



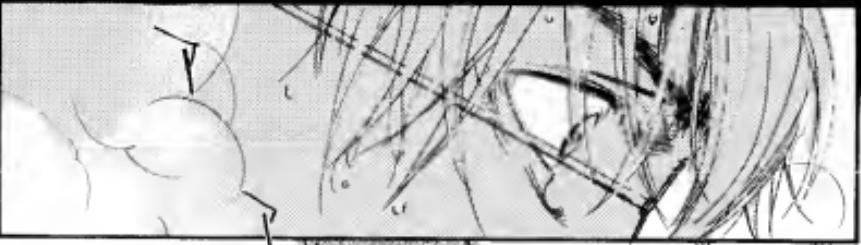




SFX: PSHHHHH



Could she have told someone about all that?



That little
bit of faith
that was
placed in me
now weighs
heavy upon
my heart.

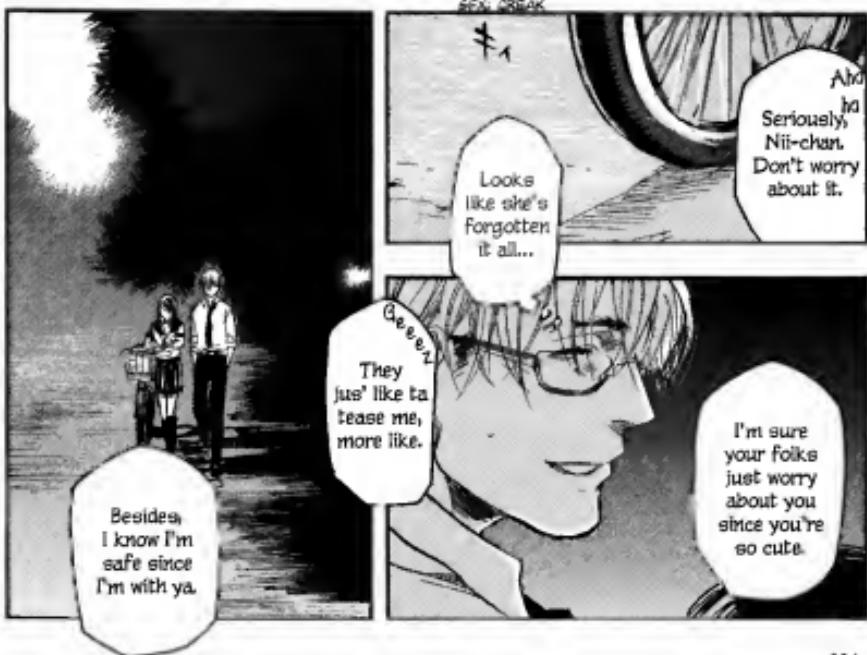
Geez,
what
are ya
sayin'?

Nii-chan.

It's 'cos
you've
matured
since
enterin'
high
school.











SFX: FIERCE WINDS



SFX: FIERCE WINDS





I dared not turn around to look back upon the forest.

And for the rest of the walk back to my grandmother's house,

As though it were the inside of a cave.

The forest was... dark









SFX: FLINCH



SFX: GLANCE



Hahaha.
Guess I
shoulda jus'
minded my
own busi-
ness.

But bring
her along
next time,
okay?

"Our little..."

"secret"

...Will
do...

Ah...

...Right.

That
little girl
is no
longer
there.

She's
now

a
woman.

24. 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996
57. 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001





I am still visited by dreams of the forest even after returning to Tokyo.

But they now feature the smile of a girl who's grown up.

And when I wake, I am invariably drenched in a cold sweat.



Well, you see...

SFX:
WHISPER

They had a huge fight, and I mean, huge.

What? Seriously?

She broke up with her man yesterday day.

She said she's got a cold, but that's probably not why she's taking the day off.

The guy she's been seeing for eight years got someone else pregnant.

Whoa.

They're probably still having it out right now,

but I just hope it doesn't escalate to her pulling a knife on him or something.

Hey.
Don't even joke about that...



Chapter 2

A Grave for a Goldfish



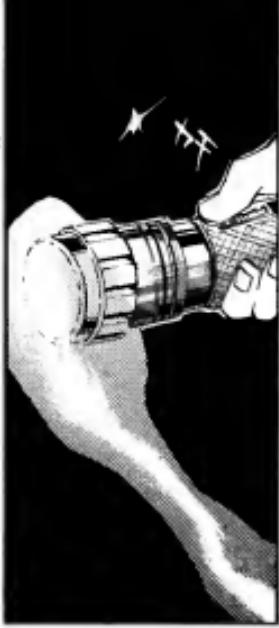


SFX: SHK, KER-SHK, SHK, KER-SHK

SFX: SHK, KER-SHK



SFX:
CLICK



SFX: SHK

SFX: SHK // KER-SHK











ALL SFX: SHK



SFX: PEEK

















Well, you see, this is all stuff that I got from my ex-boyfriend.

I didn't want to keep them, so I came here to bury them.



So this is
my grave.









SFX: FLARE





Haha.

I feel re-freshed.

were
easily ones
that I could
have said to
her as well

When all's
said and done,
this is still un-
lawful disposal
of garbage.

Just so
you know,
you shouldn't
tell anyone
about this.

Oh,
you can
go now.

Did it
seem like I
was gonna
kill myself?

What?

But...

...
Ah...

...Erm,







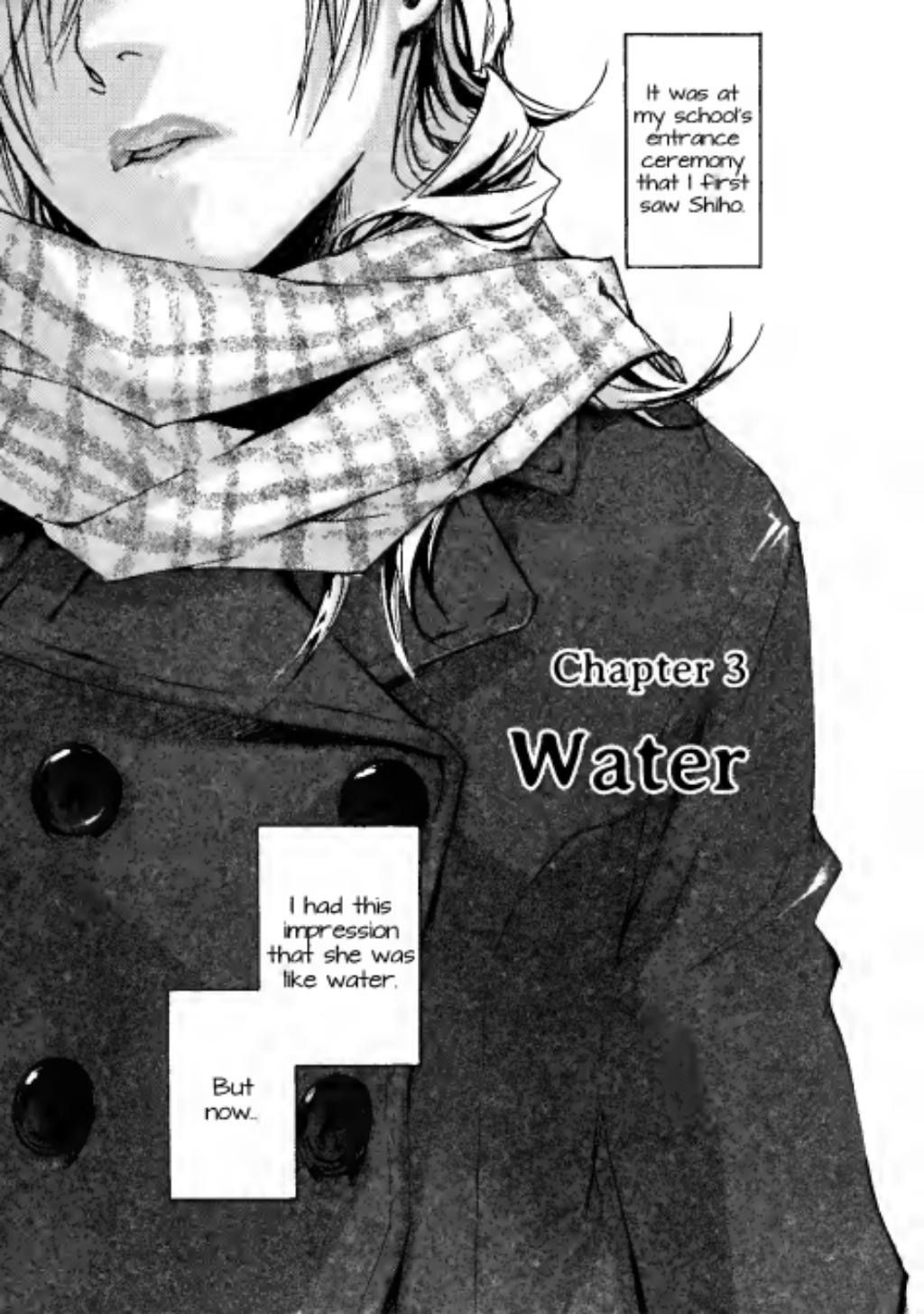
I looked
back once
and saw the
tail lights.

red,
swaying
into the
forest.

Just
like a
goldfish.







It was at
my school's
entrance
ceremony,
that I first
saw Shiho.

Chapter 3

Water

I had this
impression
that she was
like water.

But
now...



You're so lucky, Azu~

Not only is Kasugai-san cool, he's also older than us.

She's very popular with the boys.

Shiro has a fair complexion and soft, supple hair.

You're such an old man.

Sheesh, it's no fun being in an all-girls' school!!

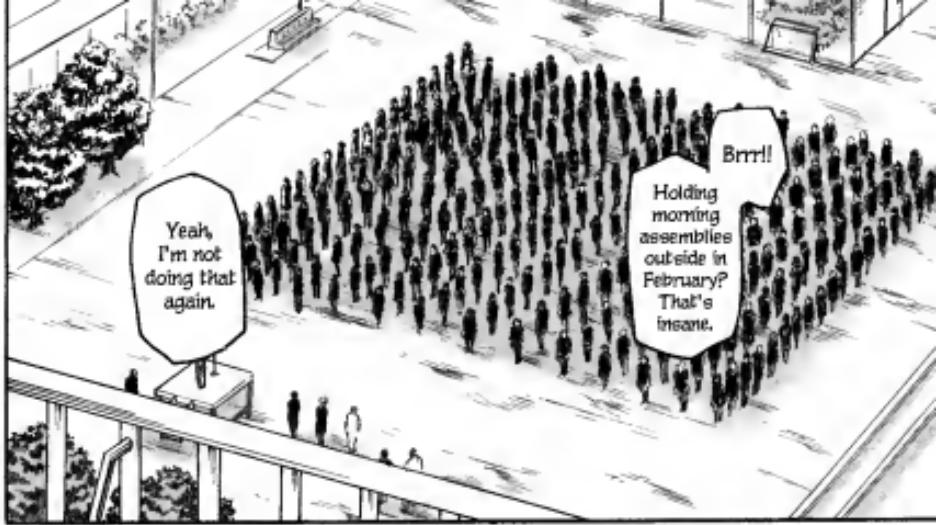
Since it's cold, how about we skip morning assembly?

While she may look like an honor student,

Hey.

Cu

her appearance belies quite the opposite.



Hmm,
the air's
kinda
dry.

Yet when
everyone's
packed in, it's
almost like a
forest.

a secret
flower
garden~

A girls'
school
is~

You're
really such
an old
man.

I forgot
my chap-
stick.

Ah.

?



I'll kiss
it on for
you

Oh,
I've got
some—

Okie,
thanks
a—



What?

...Ah.



Water.



Just like water.

With a
scent of
mint...



Just
another day
at an all-
girls' school,
eh~?



Fukafu

Looks like
we kissed--
♡





They still have the minty scent of Shiho's chapstick on them.



You
sure like
Shiko-chan,
don't you?

Eh...?

Didn't
something
like that
happen at the
end of last
year too?

Haha.

...I mean,
we're close
friends,
after all.

SPX: STABBING PAIN

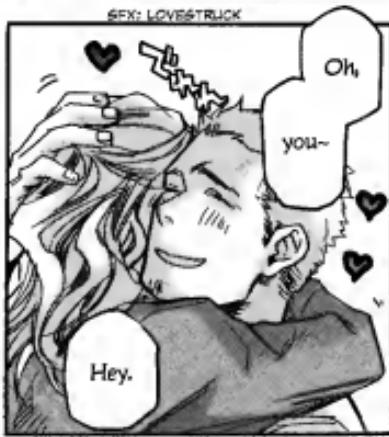
The way
you're always
going on and
on about her
is enough to
make a man
jealous, you
know~?

Huh?

Was
that...

guilt that
I just
felt?





Shiko's
were soft.

Q:

I love
you.

Yuu-kun.

Me
too.

I really
meant it.

I really
love you~

SFX: HUG

Love you
too.♥

I love
you...

But
even
so...

I felt
compelled
by some
terror to
say it over
and over
again.

The
insides
of my
head



were still
gripped by
the memory
of that
water-like
kiss,

and a deep
aching for
more had
been left in
my throat.



Sure.

Dropping
me off
here's
fine.

I'll mes-
sage you
later.



Even so,
I've done
nothing
wrong

different to
Yuu-kun's.

OF
course
it'd be

It was
what a girl
would do.

It wasn't
that kind of
kiss.

Brrr...
My lips
are rough.

Why am I
getting all
flustered
when she did
that as a
joke.

SFX: CLATTER

Ah!

Here
it is...





It's
Shiko.

SFX: MESSAGE TONE



SFX: FLIP OPEN



I'm in
agony,
like I'm
drowning.



All be-
cause of
a mean-
ingless kiss.

...What's
this?

What?

Am I
jealous?
That's so
not cool.

What is
this?

Shiho
is cute.

Everything
about her
seems soft
and gentle,

But
am I?

and she's
the very
image of
an honor
student.





I'm aware
that Shiro
isn't mine.

Azu?



You've got soft lips, Azu.



And that
neither
am I hers.

Azusa?



What's
wrong? Did
something
happen?



Hey.
Are you
crying?



Yuu-kun,



where
are you
now?



Shiro, Who were you
comparing me to?



No matter
how much
I thirst
for it

It's not
something
I can
yearn for

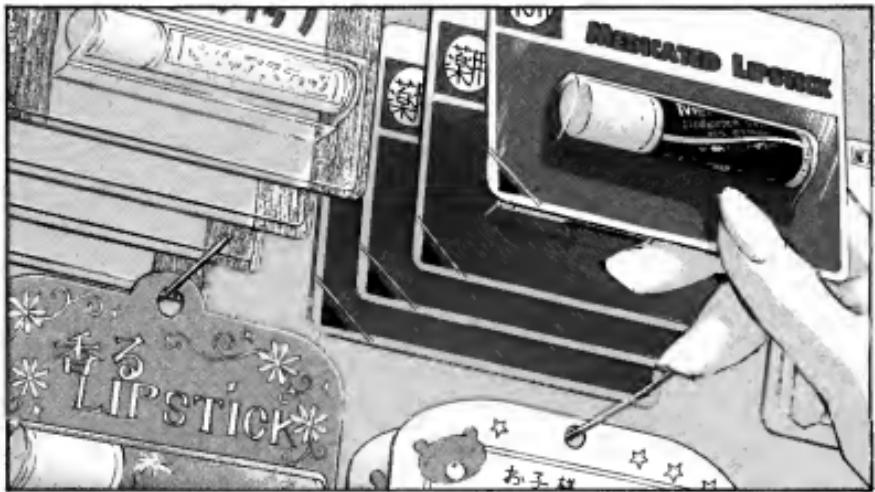
Not if I
can't have
it all to
myself.

If I
approach
it, I'll surely
drown.

Lost
in that
water.

ATM

ATM



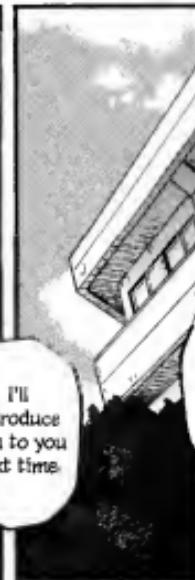
LABEL: FRAGRANT LIPSTICK



SFX: POP OUT



NOTE: A BRAND OF
MENTHOLATED LIP BALM



Well~, ehehe.
Turns out
he's quite
nice~

Oh, I
don't
know~

phew~

I wonder
if this one
will last~

Sure it
will~

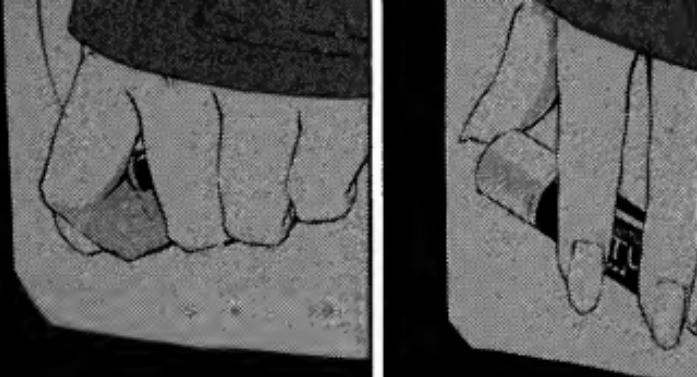


Like
fading
ripples on
a pond.

that kiss
too will
eventually
disappear.

Ah,
the bell's
ringing.





I'm sure
of it...



Let's
go.





NOTE: A REFERENCE TO MOS BURGER



You stop that! That's not how it is.

Takaoka-san is merely—

Since you've got big tits, all you need to do is use those, right?—?

Didn't you say there was this cool guy at your company?

You...

Takaoka-san is a gentleman. Sexual harassment and the like is beyond him. He wouldn't look at my breasts—

Oh, is that right?

That wasn't Takaoka-san.

Ah, was that the guy who sexually harasses you?

Uh...

Now that would be really weird.

There's no such thing as a guy who doesn't like tits—

Big sis
Sheesh
Morn'

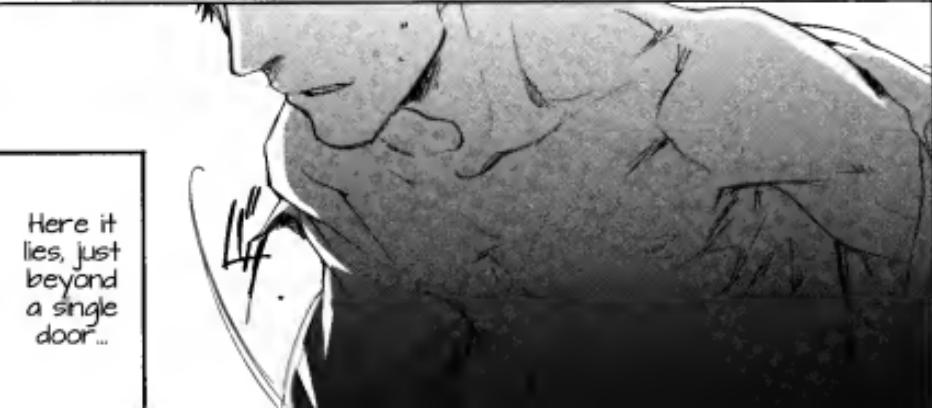
Why are you crying?

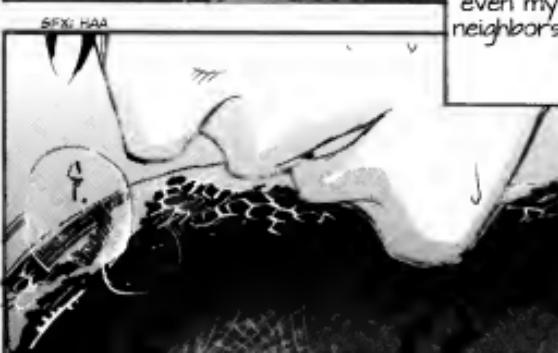


SFX: CLACK



SFX: RUSTLE





Chapter 4

Behind Glass

A forest
I return
to every
night.

I
wonder...

...just
what is
wrong with
me.

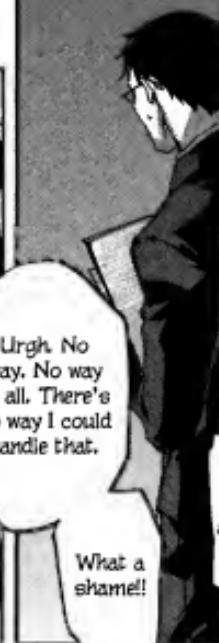


Takaoka!!

No one
else
knows.







SFX: ANIMATED CHATTER



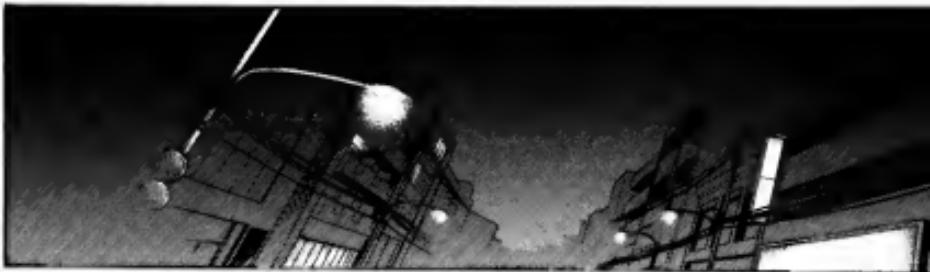




SEX: BAWL















If not,
it's fine.
Just let me
know.





If it's anyone...

...Shall we go to my place?

...it's her.



SFX:
COLD



Cool
to the
touch.



An immaculate woman

whose fingertips
are always cold.

Perhaps she can bring me out from here.





SFX: FLINCH







I want to
get to know
even more
about you...!



Thank
you

Act 'normally'.



A large, dark, textured rectangular area occupies the lower half of the frame, containing the text "Act 'normally'." and the boy's response.



Takaoka-
san

Ta-...



A small, light-colored speech bubble is positioned in the bottom right corner of a dark, textured rectangular area.





SFX: FLINCH



SFXI PUSH



This won't work.





I can't stand
the body tem-
perature of
humans.



Would you
mind leaving?
I'll call you a
taxi.



Sorry
about all
this.

1/9/19 18

SFX: RAPID
FOOTSTEPS

SFX: UNLATCH



SFX: CLICK

SFX:
SLAM

SFX: SLITHER

SFX: SLIDE

Pant

SFX:
SLITHER





So
that was
a bust,
too.

...Even
her.

Ugh,
enough...

I'm
fine with
this.





SFX: SMILE





There's no suffering to be had

in the normal
and the everyday.









SFX: BEEP

SFX: STAGGER





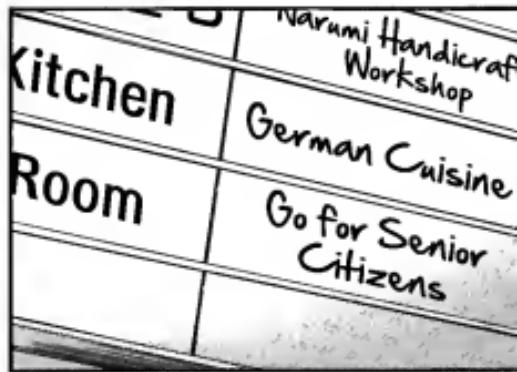


Chapter 5

Black Forest

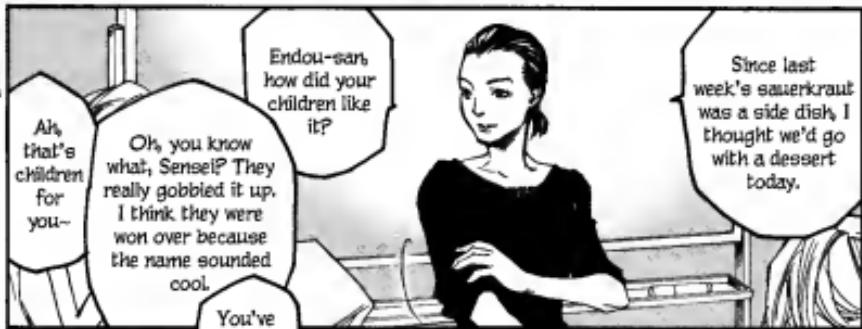
The cake
that I baked
was left
untouched
and then,
thrown away.





T/N: I.E. [BLACK FOREST (CHERRY) CAKE].







My cooking is actually partially self-taught, so please think of it as German-style cuisine.



Once you learn the fundamentals, you can then adjust the taste to your liking.



All the ingredients are also easily found here in Japan.



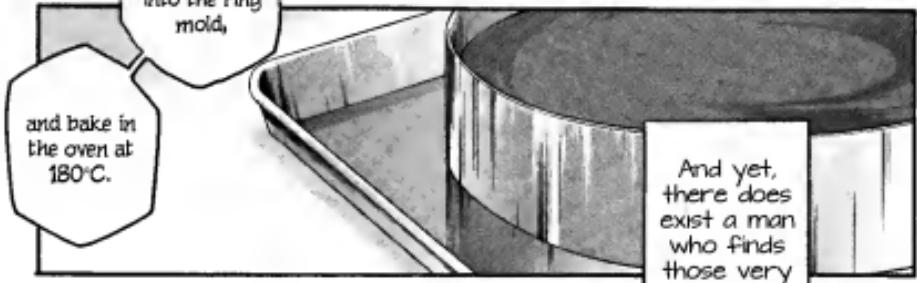
Did you end up studying abroad out of an interest in the cuisine?



I lived together with my boyfriend, but because he never did much,

I inevitably ended up learning all manner of things.

My original goal was actually to be an interpreter-

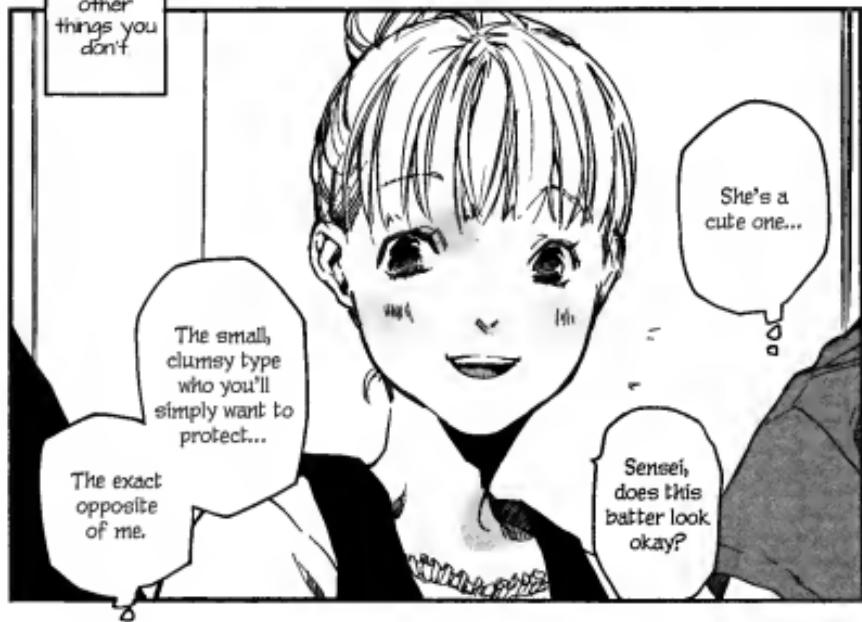






SFX: KITCHEN NOISES







Just what would her reaction be, I wonder.



Now then, while we wait for everything to finish baking, we'll make the cream filling.

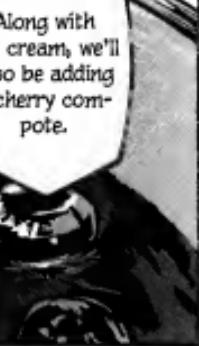


But if you're making it for kids, do cut down on it.

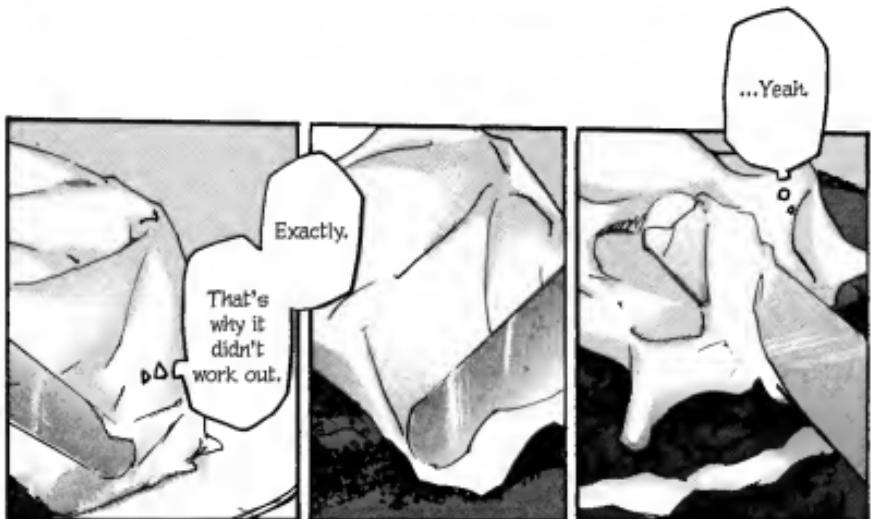
You'll want to add a generous amount of kirsch-wasser to both the cream and the baked layers. We are making a cake for adults here.

Using an off-the-shelf compote is perfectly fine too.

Along with the cream, we'll also be adding a cherry compote.







The word "Schwarzwalder" is German for "of the Black Forest",

so let's try to create that sensation when we add the bitter chocolate. Imagine a sea of conifers so dark, the forest is virtually pitch-black.

But that's all in the past.

Whether it's the sweet cream or sour cherries, just cover it all up.

You don't have to worry about trying to make it look pretty.

All of it.

Cover with chocolate until the cream beneath can't be seen. Generally speaking, such generously ample portioning is very German.

ALL SFX: SHAVE

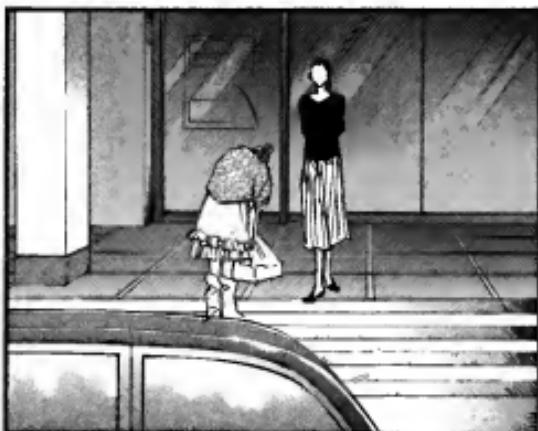
Just
bury it.

ALL SEXI SHAVE



I wonder
if he'll
remember.

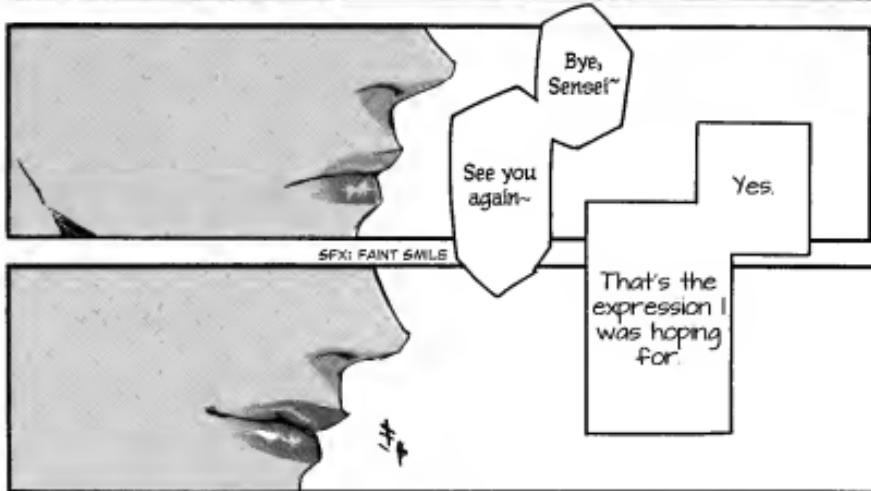


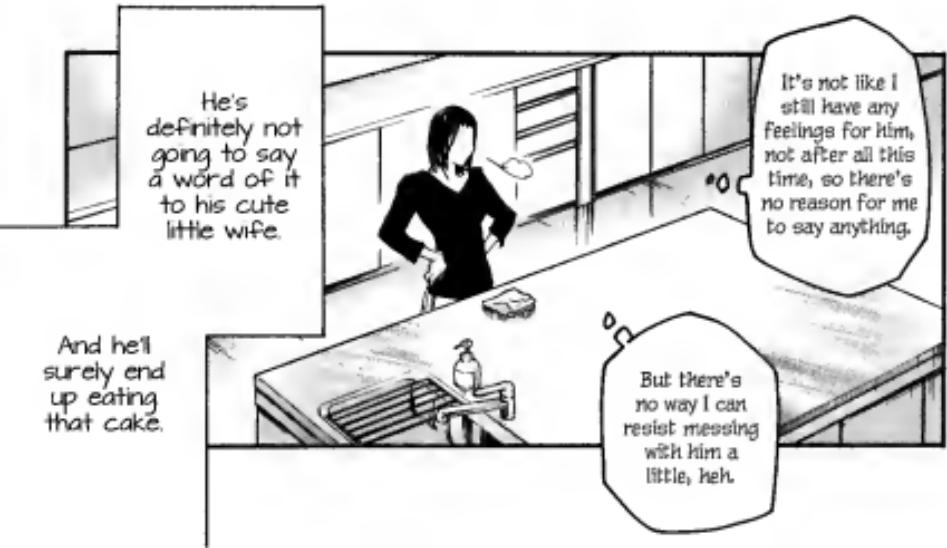


SFX:
GULP



SFX: FAINT SMILE

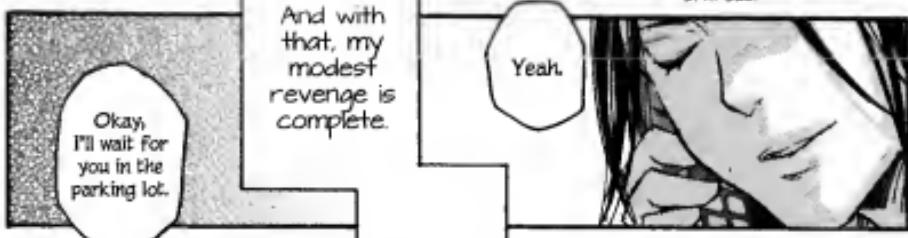




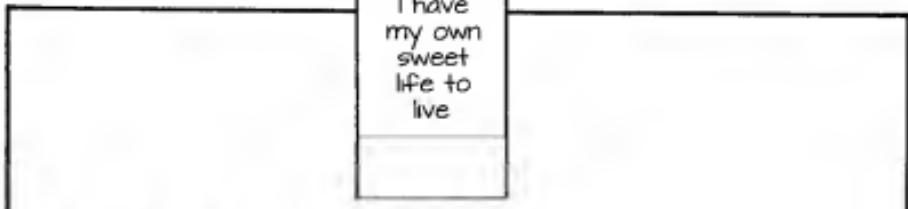


Ah, hi.

SFX: BEEP



I have my own sweet life to live



A girl who says, "It's nice to be with a guy who likes cakes."

A guy who says, "The very act of cooking food for someone else is what makes it delicious."

SFX: OPEN







SFX: FREEZE

30
Hochzeitstag

Hochzeitstag
→ Wedding Anniversary





CREAK

Chapter 6

Boat Phantom



CREAK

CREAK

CREAK

T/IN BOAT/SHIP PHANTOMS OR "FUNAYUREI" ARE SAID TO BE THE VENGEFUL GHOSTS OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN SHIPWRECKS AND NOW WISH FOR THE LIVING TO JOIN THEM. OFTEN APPEAR UNDER CERTAIN WEATHER CONDITIONS, SUCH AS RAIN OR FOG, BUT OTHERWISE PIFER ACROSS REGIONS. IF THEY ASK FOR A TOOL THAT CAN CARRY WATER, THEY SHOULD BE GIVEN ONE WITH NO BOTTOM TO AVOID THEM FLOODING THE SHIP. THEY CAN ALSO BE appeased WITH OFFERINGS.

CREAK

Just what
was L

CREAK

-san.

...Kou-
ichirou-
san.





Kiyoko.



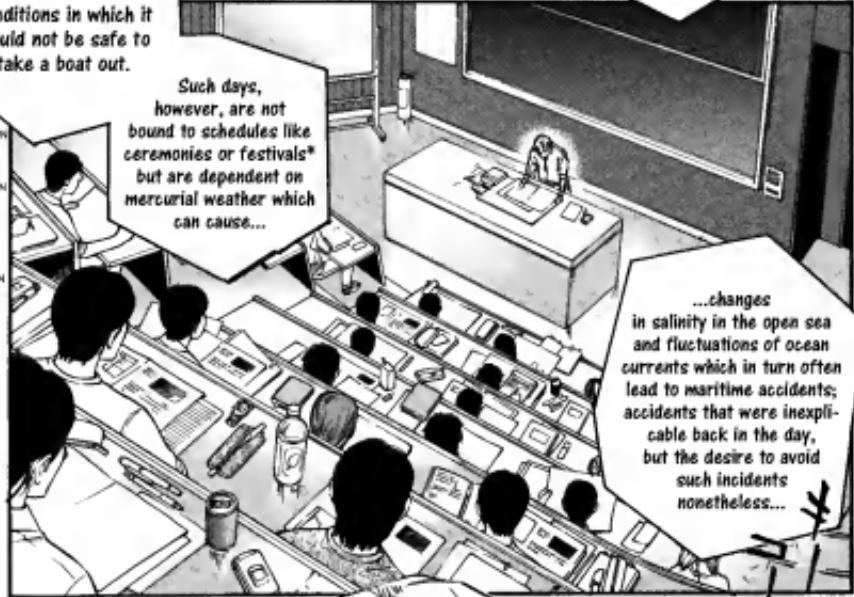


...are in fact instructions; they teach of certain days or of certain sets of conditions in which it would not be safe to take a boat out.

...and as such, from an oceanographer's point of view, the tales of so-called "boat phantoms" which have been handed down in many places...

TEN TRADITION HAS IT THAT ON CERTAIN OCCASIONS, SUCH AS O-BON (A TIME TO HONOR THE DEAD), IT IS FORBIDDEN TO GO OUT TO SEA OR FISH, OR EVEN APPROACH THE SEA.

Such days, however, are not bound to schedules like ceremonies or festivals* but are dependent on mercurial weather which can cause...



...changes in salinity in the open sea and fluctuations of ocean currents which in turn often lead to maritime accidents; accidents that were inexplicable back in the day, but the desire to avoid such incidents nonetheless...

SFX: BELL CHIMES

TEN AT SOME UNIVERSITIES, INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENDANCE CARDS ARE HANDED OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF LECTURES FOR STUDENTS TO FILL IN OR OTHERWISE MARK THESE ARE THEN COLLECTED BACK AFTER THE LECTURE ENDS.

That will be all for today. Please have your attendance cards ready for collection*.

...is what resulted in these cautionary tales being propagated and handed down among the fishermen of various regions.





Nah.

It's not
that big a
deal.

The
hand that
appears in
my dreams
every night

is one
that I'm
very
familiar
with.

That pale
hand which
now lies cold,
deep below
the water...

Well, Oohara-sensei from Office 2 over in Folklore actually goes through an exorcism every year around when he does his lecture on Ori demons,

so it looks
like it's not
just you.



...Indeed.
It's the hand
that L...

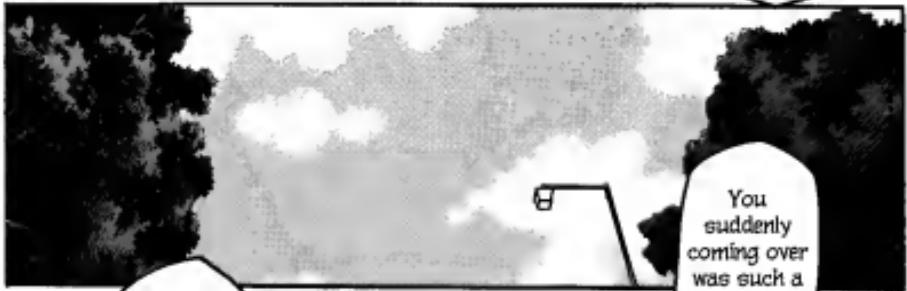


It's the one

I fell
in love
with.









But I
love her
all the
same.

CRASH



Just how
many decades
has it been
since we've been
on a boat, I
wonder.

Do you
remember?



However,
that sin
is still...

"Kouichitou-san."

You
said it was
embarrassing
to be out in
front of so
many eyes,

so you
rowed to the
middle of
the lake-



Since this is a man-made lake, it probably isn't all that deep.

It's due to the aquatic plants.

My... It's gotten quite deep, hasn't it?

I can't even see the bottom.

It only looks deep due to differences in water clarity.

Be careful not to lean out too far.

You'll fall in.

Don't worry, dear.

SFX: CREAK

"Once again?"

If you keep pushing your luck, you'll once again...



I wasn't
able to do
a thing.



All I
could
do was
stare.



Stare
at her
lovely pale
hand as
she sank.

It was
captivating.

"Kouichirou-san."

BFX: AWAKEN

Kouichirou-
san?

H,

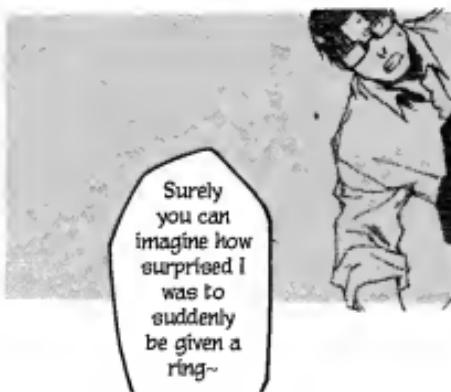
I wonder
what
happened
to it.

you
know that
cheap little
thing I gave
you back
then...?

...I'm fine.
By the way,

Are you
tired?

What
is the
matter?





Because she
was pulled up
into a nearby
boat, nothing
serious came
to pass.

SFX: HOIST

How-
ever.

SFX: COMMOTION



Are you
alright?

Hold
tight!



The sight
of that
hand was
seared
into my
eyes

And I.

Cough.
cough it
all out!!

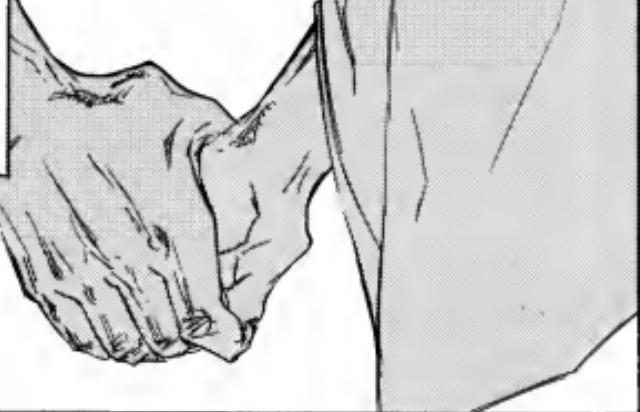


...was unable
to do so
much as
move a
single step.

SFX: COUGH

COUGH
COUGH

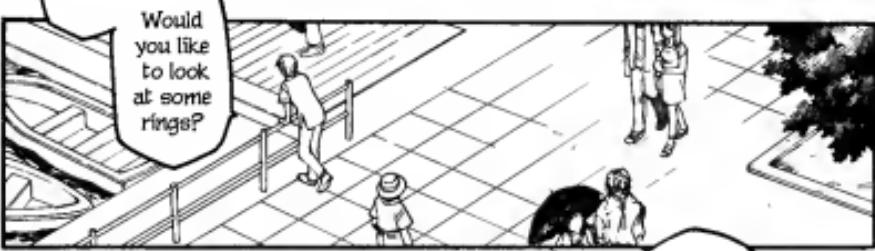




I won't ever let go of this hand.

Kiyoko.

Would you like to look at some rings?



Dear me.
Whatever brought that on, I wonder.

Well, I suppose it makes for a nice change.

SAXI PLIP



I won't ever let go..

Pyo.

But even
so, I yearn
for that
hand even
now.

SFX: PLOP

This sin
is my
passion.



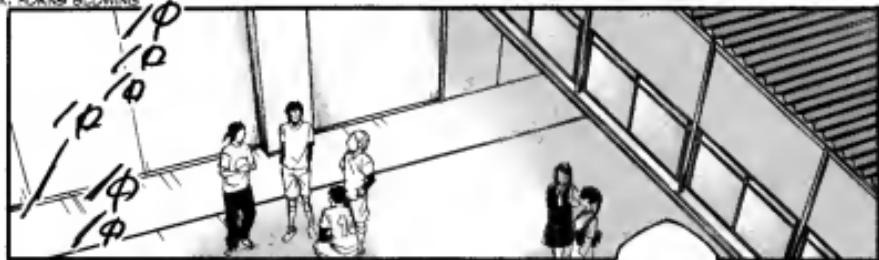




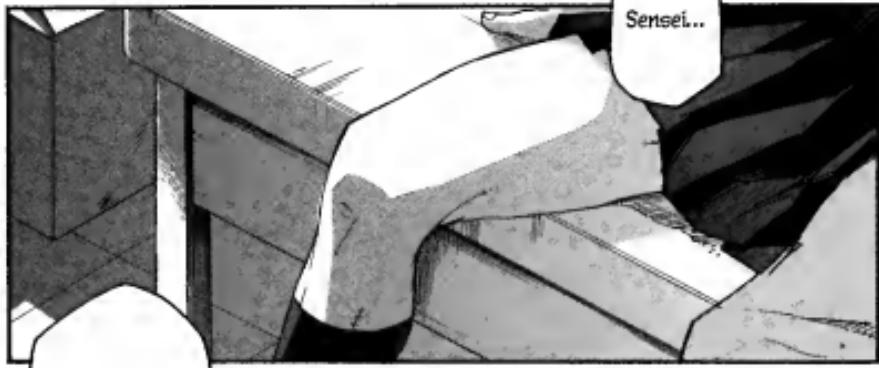




SFX: HORNS BLOWING



Sensei...



SEX: CONNECTION

What did
ya study at
university?

Come on!







Ya didn't
graduate from
a good university
in Tokyo jus' so
ya could fill in
for a teacher on
maternity leave at
a high school out
here in the sticks,
did ya?



"Migratory
fish"?



I did
research on
migratory
fish...

Oceanog-
raphy.

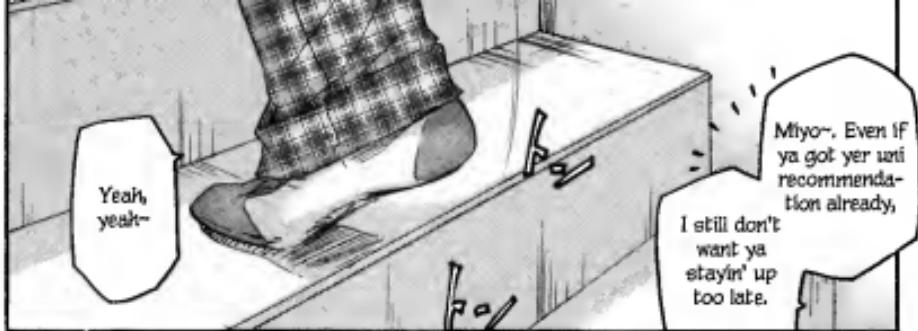


In particular, I
looked at fatal
migrations...

Chapter 7

Fatal Migration





SFX: FLASH

SFX: STEP STEP



SFX: FLASH







I don't take any of yer classes, an' yer also not writin' my uni recommendation, so if I'm found out, I'll have ta drop out.

Don't get so full o' yerself. It's nothing ta do with that.

Hmph



I knew you were someone who'd get out of here.

Thank you.





SFX: TROMBONES BLOWING





SFX STAND



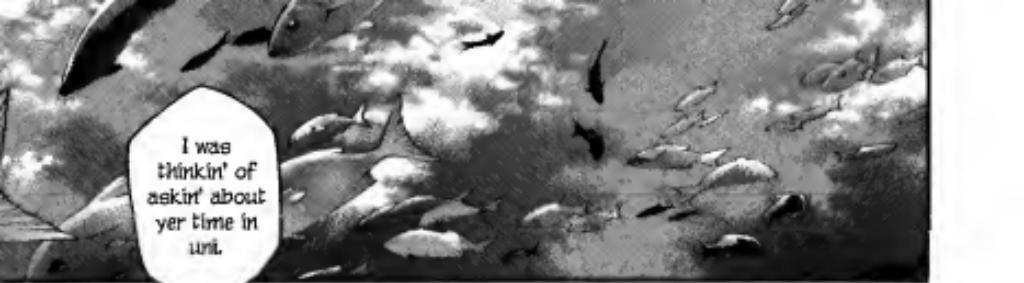


Let's go
on a date.

How's
Sunday?

Okay,
sure.



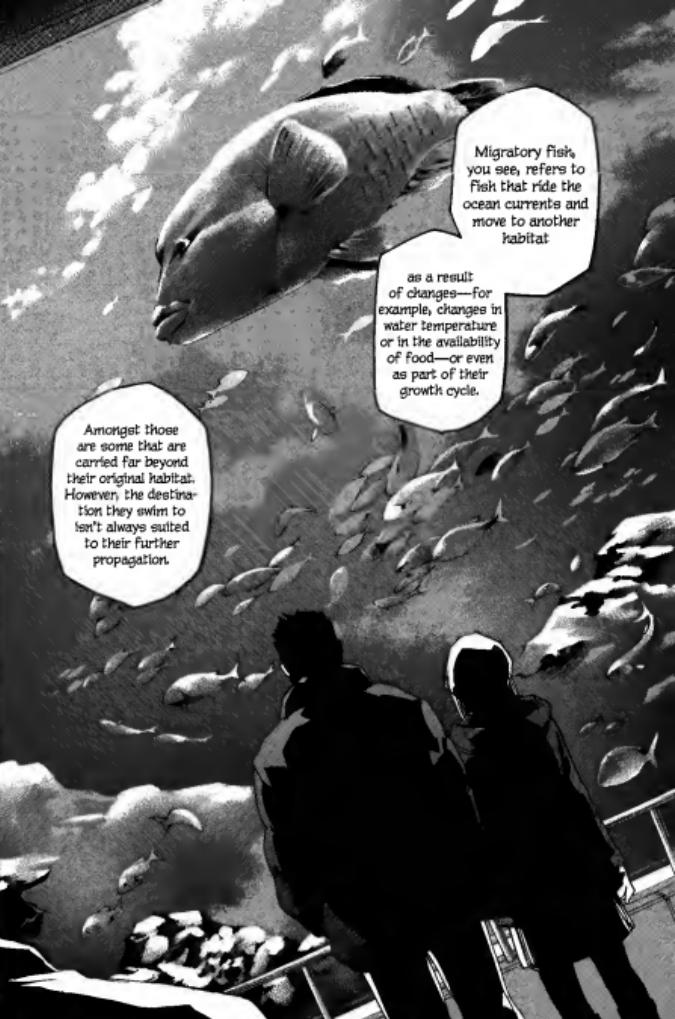


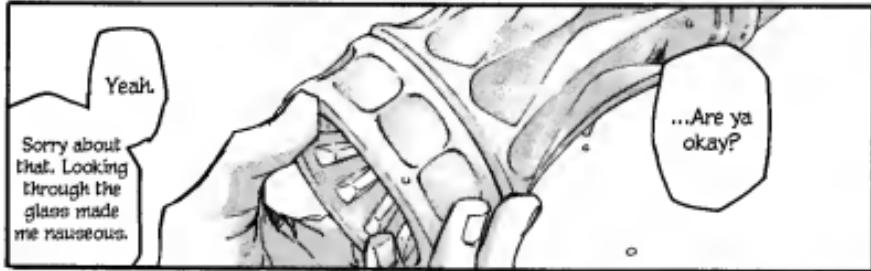
I was thinkin' of askin' about yer time in uni.





TUNA LITERALLY "DEATH MIGRATION". IT IS ALSO REFERRED TO AS "ABORTIVE MIGRATION" TO AVOID CONFUSION WITH STANDARD MIGRATION WHICH IS IN PREDATOR-MOVED GROUPS. MONSOON GROUPS MOVE FROM THE WEST COAST OF ASIA TO WARD OCEAN CURRENTS BRINGING TROPICAL FISH TO THE SEAS AROUND JAPAN, WHERE THEY THEN DIE DURING WINTER.





SFX: WHOOSH



But those that manage to cope will propagate there, and which each successive generation, they'll become better adapted to the environment.

...Well, most of them won't be able to adapt to the new temperature, pressure, or the specific composition of the seawater, and will die before the season even changes.

SFX: RUSTLING WAVES

However, that is—of course—a rare exception...

But why take such risks?

Haha.

Fish have it tough, too, huh?

...Aha.











SFX: SLIP





The two of us took trains at different times,

Bye, then, Sensei.

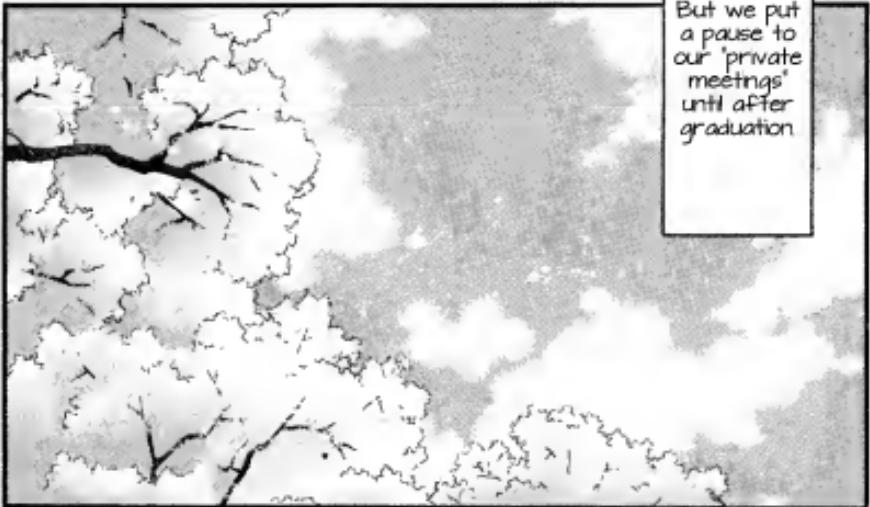
See ya at school.



and returned back to my hometown separately.



We've passed each other a number of times in the hallways since then.



But we put
a pause to
our 'private
meetings'
until after
graduation.



T/N: AFTER GRADUATION, THE SECOND BUTTON FROM A MALE SCHOOL UNIFORM IS TRADITIONALLY GIVEN AWAY TO THE GIRL A BOY LIKES AS A FORM OF CONFESSION.



SFX: SHOCK



SFX: SQUEEZE



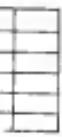
SFX: COMMOTION





"they might
as well not
go through
all o' that in
the first
place"

"If they're
mostly
gonna die
anyway."



My
Morn



That's
right I've
known
from the
very start



This love would always have a fatal end

You'll also be movin' on, right? I heard Yamamoto-sensei will be returnin' in April.

...Ah,
yeah...

I'm not
sure where,
though. I've
yet to decide
what I'll do
next...

T/N: APRIL IS, OF COURSE, WHEN THE JAPANESE SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS.

When you go
to university,
perhaps—

When I go
ta university,
I'll get a boy-
friend.

It's from
Nishizaki-
kun in
Class D.

Oh,

look at
this.

SFX: RUMMAGE



T/N: ENTERING HER SO-CALLED "NOSTOKI", A PERIOD WHEN ONE IS VERY POPULAR WITH THE OPPOSITE SEX, UNFORTUNATELY A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME "GOLDEN AGE".





I'm sure
there were things
they desperately
wanted ta see,
even if they might
die tryin'.



It's really a
question of
whether they
manage ta
see them or
not...

Within
me lies...
a deep,
dense
forest.



...I hafta
get goin'.

Bye-bye,
Sensei.

Keep
well.



SFX: FLASH



As I returned home cloaked in the growing darkness, the light on my phone blinked once and faded away.



SFX: CREAK







Huh...

But
where do
the dead
fish go, I
wonder.

SFX:
RUSTLE

SFX: CLATTER



Perhaps the currents will one day return them to the sea where they once lived.





Not tellin'.

It's my little secret.

END



Thank you so much for picking up a copy of "The Migratory Forest".

Halbara Yaku here.

This was my first time doing serialized short stories, and I agonized dearly over both the art and the stories themselves. As such, even when I read them again now, I get a feeling of butterflies in my stomach.

Nevertheless, I'd like to give a very big thank you to my long-suffering and patient editor M-sama, each and every other person who has helped me along the way, and to all the people who have been kind enough to read my work!

Yukie Halbara .9.

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f_xomics

かい　ゆう　の　もり
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Book Design	Niigami Hiroshi
Editor	Morozumi Orie
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